

LIVING ORTHODOXY



THE NEW CHAPEL OF ST. AUGUSTINE, CYVADIER, JACMEL, HAITI
ALMOST READY FOR A SERVICE!

In this issue...

Abba Serapion of Sidon

Finding Genuine Catholicism in the Orthodox East

The Holy Martyrs Trophimus & Eucarpion

Haiti: The Mission Grows... and Grows!

#152 - Vol. XXVI #2

March-April 2006

(actual release May 2006)

SINGLE COPY: \$4.00



LIVING ORTHODOXY

is published with the blessing of
HIS GRACE, GABRIEL, Bishop of Manhattan
Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

The wise Solomon says in the Proverbs: "They that have no guidance fall like leaves; but in much counsel there is safety" [Prov 11:14]. So you see what the Holy Scriptures teach us? They enjoin us not to rely on ourselves, not to regard ourselves as knowing all, not to believe that we can control ourselves, for we need help, and are in need of those who would counsel us according to God. No men are more unfortunate or nearer perdition than those who have no teachers on the way of God. For what does it mean that where no guidance is, people fall like leaves? A leaf is at first green, flourishing, beautiful; then it gradually withers, falls, and is finally trampled underfoot. So it is with a man who has no guide: at first he is always zealous in fasting, vigil, silence, obedience and other virtues; then his zeal little by little cools down and, having no one to instruct, support and fire him with zeal, he insensibly withers, and finally becomes a slave of the enemies, who do with him what they will. Of those who reveal their thoughts and actions and who do everything with counsel, the Wise One says, "in much counsel there is safety." He does not say "in the counsels of many," that is, in seeking counsel from everyone, but in seeking counsel in all things. For such a man, safety is assured "in much counsel." When we do not reveal our thoughts and intentions and do not seek the counsel of the experienced, we hold on to our own will and follow our own justifications. Then, apparently doing something good, we spread nets for ourselves, and so without realizing it we perish. For how can we understand the will of God or completely surrender ourselves to it, when we trust ourselves and cling to our own will? Thus Abba Pimen said that "our will is a brass wall between man and God."

— Abba Dorotheus (6-7th cent)

LIVING ORTHODOXY (ISSN #0279-8433) is published at a base subscription rate of \$20/yr. (see special rates below) by the St. John of Kronstadt Press at Agape Community. Periodical postage paid at Liberty, TN 37095. **POSTMASTER:** Send form 3579 to LIVING ORTHODOXY, Liberty TN 37095.

Editor: Fr. Gregory (Williams).

SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES: 2 yrs./\$38; 3 yrs./\$55. Lifetime \$800. Invoiced institutional subscriptions \$22/yr. (US). Gift subscriptions may be entered by subscribers @ \$19/yr. Group orders of 6 or more individually addressed copies @ \$18/yr. each. Parish packets of 6 or more copies to one address @ \$17/yr. each. Bulk orders of 20+ copies/issue, \$2.50/copy, invoiced for each issue. **FOREIGN SUBSCRIBERS:** surface delivery — Canada, add \$3/yr; elsewhere add \$4/yr. Air subscriptions can be accepted for one year only: Canada \$28/yr; elsewhere \$40/yr. **ALL REMITTANCES W/ ORDERS, IN U.S. FUNDS.**

Subscribers are asked to supply address changes promptly in order to assure delivery and reduce costs. Replacements for copies destroyed by the Post Office as a result of failure to provide notification of change of address will be charged @ \$4.50/copy + s&h.

Vol. XXVI, No. 2; Mar-Apr 2006; #152
(actual release May 2006)

CONTENTS

Abba Serapion of Sidon	3
Finding Genuine Catholicism in the Orthodox East	6
The Holy Martyrs Trophimus & Eucarpion	23
Haiti: The Mission Grows... and Grows!	24

Want to know more about the Haitian
Orthodox Mission? Please visit the website:
www.orthodoxhaiti.org

Looking for good Orthodox books? Please visit
the St. John of Kronstadt Press website:
www.sjkp.org

ABBA SERAPION OF SIDON

WHOM THE CHURCH CELEBRATES ON MARCH 21

It is said about Abba Serapion that he possessed all the virtues of life. He was unequalled in such areas as temperance and the knowledge of the Scriptures. He devoted numerous efforts for the purpose of returning the idolaters to the Faith of our Lord. Such was his zeal. He sold himself many times to slavery and became a bondsman purportedly to release people from the bondage of the demon and to give alms with the money that he earned by selling himself to slavery of his own accord.

They say that he was so merciful and compassionate that he gave all that he owned to the poor. Not only basic bread and books but even his very garments and became naked to the point where there was no other Father in the desert who was so impoverished as this blessed one. Therefore, harken to some of his many benefactions that you may marvel.

One day, as he walked alone down a road, a certain beggar asked him for alms. He had nothing. So he gave him his overcoat and he was left with his undershirt. Then he proceeded down the same road and met another man who was naked, and who shivered from the chill in the air. So he had compassion on him and gave his undershirt to him and he was left all but naked. He kept only one copy of the Gospel so that he would read it. Later he saw one of the brethren, a fellow monk, and the monk asked him who had made him naked. He answered: "This present Gospel." By this he meant that wishing to do all those things that the Lord instructed us to do, he gave everything that he possessed so that he would not disobey the Gospel. A while later he sold the Bible too and distributed the money to the poor. His disciple asked him to tell him why he sold it. He said: "Believe me, son, that in order to do the Lord's will, Who declared: 'sell thy belongings and give alms to the poor,' I gave not only the remainder of my property but even the very Master himself, and I distributed the money to the poor."

At another time he happened to be in the company of his novice at a fortress and he instructed him

to sell him to a group of idolaters who at that time were composing a comic play. And the disciple did so. The money that he collected he gave to Serapion in secret and he kept it to the very end. The righteous one remained in their service and he was obedient to them in everything and fulfilled their demands. During the day, he worked without eating much, and at night he ate a little bread and water and prayed the greater part of the night. He also memorized many parts of the Gospel.

When the men who bought him noticed his piety, they were amazed. And as time passed, they respected him all the more. As a result of this, he brought them to the knowledge of God both by word and deed with the patronage of divine grace. And after they were baptized, they thanked him saying: "In you we have witnessed the grace of God. We give you freedom just as you have delivered us from the slavery of the demon." The Righteous one answered: "Because the all merciful God has enlightened you and you have come to the knowledge of the truth, it is not necessary that I remain in your house any longer. You should know that I was not anyone's slave. I was an ascetic in Egypt and a free man. I became your servant only that I might free you from delusion. Take these coins that you gave me because I kept them in order to return them to you today. And please forgive me so that I may lead others to the Faith as well. But they pleaded him saying that he should stay with them as their master and not as a slave. But he did not consent to this. They pleaded with him for a second time to take the money with which they had bought him to distribute it to the poor. He answered: "You distribute it, for the money is yours."

He gave up that place and lived as an apostle. He never carried gold or silver or a sack or a cane, or anything to eat. He was poor and needy wearing only one overcoat as the apostles themselves. He went to Athens without eating anything for three days and was threatened by hunger. He was led to a part of the city where the most prominent people of the land had gathered and he cried out to them:

"Give me a helping hand oh wise men of Athens." As they asked him where he was from and what he needed, Saint Serapion answered: "I am a monk, an Egyptian by birth, and I have been accosted by three creditors from my very youth. Two of them I was able to pay off and they do not harass me any longer. But the third one threatens me and states that if I do not pay him today, he will bring me to court and sentence me to death, the audacious one." The wise men asked him who the three creditors were. He answered: "One of them is avarice, the second is fornication, and the third is gluttony; and they vex me to the extreme. I vanquished the two with God's help, because they are external in nature. But the appetite always seeks its own and it cries out at all times. It has been at least four days since I have eaten. They offered him a few coins out of which he purchased a loaf of bread, and gave the rest to alms. From this incident the Athenians knew that he as a virtuous man.

Not long later he went to Lacedaemonia, and sold himself to an aristocrat who belonged to the heresy of the Manichaeans. Within one year, he returned everyone in that house to the true Faith and reimbursed them for his purchase. Then by divine inspiration he boarded a ship that was bound for Rome with the purpose of leading as many there as he could to the true Faith. Three days passed on the ship and the sailors did not see him eat once, so they asked him the reason. He said that he had no food. Some of them chided him saying: "How did you dare come on board without money and how would you pay your fare?" The righteous one answered with meekness: "If you have the authority, retain me on board and benefit your souls. Otherwise take me back to where you found me." The sailors then gave him food to eat so that he would not perish.

When they arrived at Rome, he disembarked and inquired if there might be a virtuous monk in the vicinity. He learned that there was a pious virgin who kept to herself and never once did she converse with a man. Serapion was enlightened by the Holy Spirit and went straight to her cell and said to her maidservant: "Tell your mistress that an abba from Egypt has arrived and wishes to speak to her." The maidservant went straight to the virgin and

told her, but she did not consent to do so, stating that there was no reason for her to speak to a man. When the great Serapion noticed that, he stood there for three days begging her to speak to him but she refused. He said this to her maidservant: "Go and tell her that God has sent me to speak to her for her own benefit."

The righteous virgin acquiesced after this. Serapion entered and said to her: "Why do you remain idle?" She replied: "I am not idle. I am on my way." He asked her: "Where are you going?" The virgin answered: "I go to my Master." The abba then says to her: "Are you dead or alive?" She said: "I place my hopes in God, because I am dead in the flesh. For whosoever lives a carnal existence in the world does not go to God." The saint said: "If you wish that I believe you, come with me and do as I tell you." She answered: "I have been here for twenty years now in this enclosure. If I went out what would people say?" "If you are dead what do you care about what people say?" said the righteous Serapion. "Whether a dead man is praised or chided, he considers it as naught. Therefore come out so that you will acknowledge your deluded state."

At that point the virgin realized that he was a virtuous man. Thus she exited out of humility and when they came to a Church, Serapion says to her: "If you wish to be convinced, if indeed you are dead in the world not caring about impressing people, but desire only the celestial things, take off your garments and be completely naked without even your underwear, and I will do the same, and we will pass through the center of the city naked without any shame whatsoever." The virgin then says to him: "If I do as you tell me, I shall scandalize the citizens and they will say that I am possessed by a demon or that I am insane." The righteous one said: "The dead man does not feel anything. Whether he is mocked or praised, he is not aware of anything. Therefore you too. If you are telling the truth that you are dead in the world and live in Christ according to his spostle, pay no attention to what people say about you, whether they judge or condemn you. Only do as I tell you and follow me."

Finally, the virgin realized her folly and fell at the elder's feet in tears saying: "I beg of thee O Abba, forgive me for the Lord as I cannot consent

to this. Whatever else you tell me, I will do gladly.” The all-wise one said to her: “Go back to your cell O Sister. Humble yourself and do not boast that you are dead in the world, for you are not ingenuous in thinking that you are more virtuous than others. But be more humble, for you still live in the world and prefer to unfold yourself on people. I am dead in the flesh so I can walk about naked and do other paranoid things so that people may buffet me. Therefore I am not proud in saying that I have mortified myself as you do.” With these soul-saving words he exhorted her and corrected her errors, after which she thanked him and returned to her cell. Thenceforward she conducted herself with more virtue and humility.

Serapion returned to the desert and there benefited the Monks with a great variety of examples. One of his favorite examples was the following story which was intended for those who overindulged in eating (secretly).

When I was younger, and in obedience to Abba Theodore, I was waylaid by the demon of gluttony and I would steal one loaf of bread from the refectory and eat it at night behind the scenes. My conscience however censured me and the pleasure

I gained from eating the bread was less than the shame and sorrow that haunted me. One time a group of brethren came to my elder and they spoke about gluttony and other transgressions and that each one of us should confess the stirrings of his mind to the spiritual fathers. As I heard these things I thought that they meant it for me. So I fell at their feet with tears and confessed my sin in the open, taking out the bread from my bosom in order to suffer more shame. “Have courage and hope in God my son, for your humility made it possible to vanquish the demon as you have put him to shame and he no longer has power over you.”

As the abba was saying these things to me, an infernal demon came out of my chest as a fiery outburst and it left a terrible smell in that place so that it necessitated our departure. From that time on I never committed such a trespass with God’s help.

With these words the righteous one enjoined the brethren. He survived for many years to do many good deeds for his neighbor and the number of miracles that he performed were by no means few. Lastly, he surrendered his soul to the desired Lord to Whom is due glory, honor, and worship unto the ages. Amen.

By the intercessions of Thy Saints O Lord have mercy on us.

Translated by Leo Papadopoulos from the *Great Synaxaristes*,
Matthew Lagges, publisher, Athens 1960. Vol. III pp. 323-27. All rights reserved. 2004.

Our Lord and Savior, when giving us a thorough lesson on the virtue of patience and gentleness (i.e., teaching us not only to profess it with our lips, but to store it up in the inmost recesses of the soul) gave us this summary of evangelical perfection, saying: “If anyone smite thee on thy right cheek, offer him the other also (doubtless the “right” cheek is mentioned, as another “right” cheek cannot be found except, so to speak, in the face of the inner man), and by this He desires entirely to remove all incitement to anger from the deepest recesses of the soul; that is, if your external “right” cheek has received a blow from the stiker, the inner man also humbly consenting may offer its “right” cheek to be smitten, sympathising with the suffering of the outward man, and in a way submitting and subjecting its own body to wrong from the striker, that the inner man may not even silently be disturbed in itself at the blows.

— Abba Joseph,
from the *Conessions* of St. John Cassian
c. AD 430

FINDING GENUINE CATHOLICISM IN THE ORTHODOX EAST

BY KEVIN KIRWAN

For quite some time I have wanted to put down in writing some of the reasons, based on historical discoveries, which led us to embrace Eastern Orthodoxy. It is something that family and friends have probably wondered about also. Perhaps by actually writing down why we, along with our three youngest sons, did so will shed some light on what is probably a mystery for most of those who know us.

I hope, as does anyone who undertakes such a project, not to be misunderstood or have my intentions mischaracterized. It is not my intention to disparage unfairly the Roman Catholic Church in which both Jane and I were raised, or even the Protestants with whom I got involved during college and early adulthood. Certain understandings or teachings will be scrutinized and even criticized. These are observations based on more honest and accurate historical information than that which I had previously been exposed. It is, I believe, a much better informed position now that we have had an opportunity to study more closely the roots of our holy Catholic faith and the testimony of its ancient fathers. So, while some might say we have left Catholicism, or at least have become schismatic, I can show this is not the case. I think you will see by the end of this apologia that far from wanting to attack Catholicism or abandon her, we want only to experience her true worship and cling to her undefiled teachings. So I ask your patience and consideration of what is presented.

There is an old Catholic saying that one becomes Catholic in his first seven years of life. I believe there is much validity to that statement. I am not so sure it is the case today, however, for young Roman Catholics growing up with the ceaseless liturgical and theological experimentations to which they are constantly being subjected, but for someone like me who had the advantage of my early childhood being pre-Vatican II, it was very beneficial. I am confident that, especially in regard to my own eventual dislodging from Protestant fundamentalism, it was those early years making a profound influence on my own psyche that would help guide me back to genuine Orthodox Catholicism

today. Even while wandering in that desert of protestant confusion with its thousands of denominations (each one being built upon some individual personal revelation or biblical emphasis) I would always miss the sense of the sacred and Catholicism's historical continuity. I always sensed that I was missing or had turned away from something I shouldn't have. It required a former protestant minister to challenge me to look at the ancient Church with the sincerity to know what it really taught. Then began a journey that would eventually lead us to Catholic Eastern Orthodoxy, the Church of the Holy Apostles, and heroic Martyrs.

A YOUTHFUL DETOUR TO PROTESTANT FUNDAMENTALISM

"Are you saved?" That was a question I heard posed for the first time by an upper classman at Sioux Falls College, a small Baptist affiliated institution I was attending to play football. I was sitting outside a laundromat not far from campus waiting for some clothes to dry when one of the campus's "Jesus people" zeroed in on this lost looking freshman. I glanced up and managed to mutter something like "I'm Roman Catholic," hoping somehow that would dissuade him. Saying that to a motivated and sincere protestant fundamentalist—unbeknownst to me at the time—was not going to be a very effective tactic for ending that conversation. It would be the first of many conversations with him and others about Christ, Scripture and what it meant to be a Christian.

To make a long story short, a couple of months later I would become a Bible-only-believing zealot. Looking back, I have to admit I met many wonderful and sincere people who seemed to love God with all their hearts. It was a period when I immersed myself in Scripture. It would also, sadly, be a time of throwing out the proverbial baby with the bathwater, as I did more than just become better acquainted with the teachings of Christ in sacred Scripture. During this period, I began to accept the innovative understandings of protestant

fundamentalism as true and used them to distort the biblical testimony in ways that had nothing to do with what the Apostles actually taught. Even as I insisted the Scripture alone contained all that we needed to understand Christ and His teaching, I systematically was rejecting and throwing out much of what it taught, especially regarding the sacraments and ecclesiology. So, while I became more proficient at quoting scripture, I was, unfortunately, not believing and, in some cases, ignoring vast sections of it, in order to make it fit protestant perspectives never known in the ancient Church—all the while in my delusions thinking I was being faithful to its testimony.

Over the next few years, Jane and I would get married, have the first two of our six sons and do the best we could to recapture the essence of the Church as we thought it was portrayed and practiced in the Book of Acts. Being young and ignorant was no hurdle when zeal and determination combined. Together with a few other like-minded visionaries, we started gathering together anyone who would listen to us, and before long, a small yet dedicated group of mostly young people came to believe that they were, in fact, recreating the biblical Church. As I said, ignorance and youthful arrogance were not going to be deterrents.

THE EVANGELICALS WHO FOUND THE ANCIENT FAITH

Janene was a young single woman who had somehow found her way to our Bible-believing only, non-denominational, making-it-up-as-we-go-along sect. Of course, none of us knew that at the time, as we were sure that we were probably the only true Christians in the area. I can only attribute such naiveté to youthful zeal without knowledge and, of course, the much more apparent cause, good old-fashioned arrogance. At this time, I was a supposed 26 year old elder being financially supported, along with a couple of others, by this group when Janene first appeared at one of our meetings.

Not too long after she first began fellowshiping with us, Janene approached me and suggested that I should meet with her older brother Ken who was doing some of the same things we

were trying to do here. Ken lived in Indianapolis and was the leader of a much larger congregation of youthful believers. Soon plans were made to meet as he was returning home for a visit to his folks in Cleghorn, Iowa, just forty minutes or so from Sioux City. The meeting was arranged and Ken met with me and the other leaders of our group in our upstairs apartment on Jackson Street.

The one thing I will never forget about that initial meeting was a question posed by Ken. It was to be one of the most challenging things I had ever been confronted with. It went something like this: “You fellas are all very dedicated and eager to experience genuine Christianity and you no doubt value sacred Scripture as your rule of Faith. You also know that even the most dedicated and sincere holders of *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone) are often at odds with one another, often holding to and even promoting profoundly different understandings as to what the Scriptures actually teach.” He didn’t know, but that was really addressing a major concern in our own group, as the every man and his own interpretation of scripture were causing constant tensions even in the leadership. “Tell me,” he continued, “Who do you think would have a better grasp of what Scripture actually taught and meant? You and I sitting in this living room two thousand years removed from when it was written in another language by men of a completely different culture, or would those who were actually instructed in the Christian Faith personally by these Apostles and appointed by them to assume leadership roles as their successors have better understanding about who they were, what they taught, and the meanings contained in their writings?”

This was startling, something I had never stopped to consider. Why, of course, if someone actually knew, spent time with and was trained by one of the original Apostles for a leadership role in the Church, he would have much better understanding of what the Apostles wrote or taught than some “Johnny-come-latelys” like us two thousand years removed. All of our prior assertions to the contrary, it was becoming painfully obvious that it was not the Holy Spirit giving us insight into what the Bible taught. After all, we could not determine the truth among ourselves on a whole

list of doctrinal issues or biblical understandings. But who were these disciples of the Apostles and what did they have to say, if anything, relevant to our situation? This would be the beginning of a quest for some of us and a departing point for others.

Soon we were considering the writings of St. Ignatius of Antioch who wrote a series of letters on his way to Rome where he was to receive a martyr's crown by being thrown to the lions in the infamous Roman Arena. This man, ancient bishop, disciple of the Apostles themselves and reputed to be the very child Christ held when He said, "Unless you become like this child, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven," revealed understandings in his letters that were awfully, and, to some of us, uncomfortably "Catholic," even using that very term to describe the Church of which he was a bishop. He spoke of the unity of the Church being centered in the local bishop and even of the Eucharist or Holy Communion in unmistakably Catholic terms.

I was stunned and shaken and began to read as much as I could about the ancient Church and its early fathers, who almost all were martyred for their Faith. It was a Faith that our little experimenting sect and I knew nothing about. At the same time, I could almost hear familiar voices from my youth. Perhaps some of the same things the good nuns had tried to teach me in grade school were right, especially when put into historical context. Catholicism, from what I was beginning to see in the patristic writing, was not a medieval man-made superficial structure, but something alive and truly Christ-centered and it was becoming increasingly evident it was the very thing I was looking for, but was only now beginning to comprehend.

After some time had passed a few of us in that original group of house church devotees decided we too needed to start on that road to genuine biblical and historical Christianity—a journey that would finally bring us to the Church Christ founded. The Church that Christ established did not cease to exist when His Apostles died or the canon of Scripture was completed. It not only survived but also flourished because He promised never to abandon or forsake Her even unto the end of time. (*Matthew 28:20*) The arrogance of our previous assumptions began to be torn down with the newly acquired

understanding of Scripture, courtesy of the patristic testimony. No longer could we believe the previous nonsense we had held with such assurance. It would mean that Christ lied. If Christ was true to His word, His Church was to be perpetually under His divine protection and safeguarded. It would also mean that He would not need us to reinvent it, or start it over. We only would need to find it, and then be joined to it.

THE CHOICE: THE LATIN WEST OR ORTHODOX EAST?

Once it is understood that Christ is literally true to His word, and that He has established His Church, you are then faced with only two real alternatives—the Orthodox Catholic East or the Roman Catholic West. Both can and do trace themselves to apostolic origins. Both of them can produce lists of bishops with one preceding the other going all the way back to one of the Apostles themselves. Antioch in present day Syria, where followers of Christ were first called Christians, claims Peter as its founder and first bishop. Peter lived and taught there some seven years prior to his ever making his way to the already thriving Christian Community in Rome.

Pope Gregory the Great, with whom we will deal with at length later in this treatise, when writing to Eulogius the Patriarch of Alexandria, affirms that he, along with the Patriarch of Antioch, shared equally in the See of Peter. This "See" of Peter is not unique to Rome. This false and unhistorically based claim is often made by those attempting to place an incorrect emphasis on Roman papal authority.

According to the words of Pope Gregory, three bishops occupy that See. *"Wherefore though there are many apostles, yet with regard to the principality itself the See of the Prince of the Apostles alone has grown strong in authority, which in three places (Antioch, Alexandria and Rome) is the See of the one. For he exalted the See in which he deigned even to rest and end the present life. (Rome where Peter died) He himself adorned the See to which he sent his disciple as an evangelist. (Alexandria, where St. Mark his disciple went,) He himself stablished the See in which,*

though he was to leave it, he sat for seven years. (Antioch where, according to St. Gregory, St. Peter sat or ruled as bishop) Since then it is the see of one, and one See, over which by Divine authority three bishops now preside [1].

The Roman Apostolic See was never understood to be uniquely St. Peter's by the early fathers. In all the ancient documents this See is referred to as the Church of Peter and Paul, not Peter's alone as both of them, perhaps Paul even more so, helped to establish it in the Catholic Faith.

I suppose if someone feels it absolutely necessary to be aligned with the Primary See of Peter he will be compelled to join himself to the Church of Antioch. After all according to Pope Gregory the Great, St. Peter was bishop of Antioch before ever setting foot in Rome. Antioch was a thriving Church and the original Petrine See long before the Gospel ever reached the Roman capital. It was also in Antioch that the followers of this Jesus of Nazareth were first called Christians, according to the book of Acts.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF THE FIRST MILLENNIUM

For most of the first thousand years of the Church, unity of the East and West was maintained. Mutual respect for each of their Apostolic origins and the desire of all to cling to genuine Holy Tradition as espoused by the ancient fathers and clarified by Ecumenical Councils would ensure unity and keep in check, for the most part, the ambitions of bishops who would think more highly of themselves than they ought. That is not to say there wasn't some trouble from time to time. Bishops and priests of even great Apostolic Sees would occasionally wander off into error and heresy, following their own inclinations rather than the consistent understandings of the Church.

One of the more interesting controversies involves Pope Gregory the Great, whom I have already briefly mentioned, and who presided as Bishop of Rome at the end of the sixth century. It concerned a dispute he had with the Patriarch of Constantinople, John the Faster, over his appropriation of a title that no bishop should assume.

Before we look at this conflict between Pope Gregory and the Patriarch, let's go back a century or so earlier and consider what the early Catholic Church understood to be the earmarks of a true Catholic. It may come as a shock for most loyal Roman Catholics, but nowhere will they find blind obedience to the Roman bishop or any other bishop to be the standard employed by the ancient Church in determining fidelity to Christ's Catholic Church.

A GENERAL RULE FOR DISTINGUISHING CATHOLIC TRUTH

There is no better starting point than with one of the early Latin fathers, St. Vincent of Lerins. St. Vincent was of Gallic nationality (modern-day France) and a monk of the famous monastery of Lerins. About the year 434 this Latin father gave the Catholic Church one of its great apologetic works, *The Remembrancer* or *The Commonitory*, as it is now known. It is the classic restating of apostolic understanding as to how one determines the genuine Catholic Faith. As you consider what he writes, understand that this approach was universally accepted and understood by both East and West all the way up to the 14th century.

According to Brian Tierney, a renowned modern day Roman Catholic historian, Duns Scotus, a Franciscan philosopher who lived in the early 14th century, building upon the ideas of Bonaventure, abandoned the ancient Catholic criteria and became the father of the new "living tradition." Suddenly, the temporal historical dimension simply vanished from the Latin arguments, and it was not what the Church had always proclaimed that was crucial and necessary to believe, but rather what the Church was proclaiming then and there, in their own time [2].

This dramatic and novel shift would be the precursor for all manner of baseless and unfounded teachings infiltrating the Latin Church. Holy Tradition was being replaced with the so-called "living tradition." The abandonment of Catholic Tradition was now accelerating with alarming frequency.

Here are some excerpts from the aforementioned *The Commonitory*. You will be able to clearly see how the entire Catholic world, both East and

West, determined what was, or was not, Catholic. This was the standard apologia for all Catholics well into the 14th century—and still is for those wanting to hold genuine Holy Tradition.

ST. VINCENT OF LERINS: *THE COMMONITORY*

Chapter II. [4] I have often inquired earnestly and attentively of very many men eminent for sanctity and learning, how and by what sure and so to speak universal rule I may be able to distinguish the truth of the Catholic faith from the falsehood of heretical pravity; and I have always and in almost every instance, received an answer to this effect: That whether I or any one else should wish to detect the frauds and avoid the snares of heretics as they rise, and continue sound and complete in the Catholic faith, we must, the Lord helping, fortify our own belief in two ways: first, by the authority of the Divine Law, and then by the Tradition of the Catholic Church.

[6] Moreover, in the Catholic Church itself, all possible care must be taken that we hold that Faith which has been believed everywhere, always, by all. For that is truly in the strictest sense “Catholic” which, as the name itself and the reason of the thing declare, comprehends all universally. This rule we shall observe if we follow universality, antiquity, and consent. We shall follow universality if we confess that one faith to be true, which the whole world confesses; antiquity, if we no wise depart from those interpretations which it is manifest were notoriously held by our ancestors and fathers; consent, in like manner, if like antiquity itself we adhere to the consistent definitions and determinations of all, or at least of almost all priests and doctors.

Here is a concise and to-the-point patristic approach to determine what is “Catholic.” In order for something to be “Catholic,” the following three criteria must be evident: Universality, Antiquity, and Consent. These are the great pillars of Catholic truth, and if any understanding cannot find its basis in all three, then it is to be rejected as profane. St. Vincent in Chapter XX shows us now the traits of a true and genuine Catholic.

Chapter XX [48] This being the case, he is the true and genuine Catholic who loves the truth of God, who loves the Church, who loves the Body of Christ, who esteems divine religion and the Catholic Faith above everything, above the authority, above the regard, above the genius, above the eloquence, above the philosophy, of every man whatsoever; who sets light by all of these, and continuing steadfast and established in the faith, resolves that he will believe that, and only that, which he is sure the Catholic Church has held universally and from ancient time; but that whatsoever new and unheard of doctrine he shall find to have been furtively introduced by some one or another, besides that of all, or contrary to that of all the saints, this he shall understand does not pertain to religion, but is permitted as a trial [3].

St. Vincent does two things here. First he shows it is incumbent upon every believer to attempt to understand the ancient and universally accepted dogmas of the Church. This is no small task and involves study and application, something few are willing to do today. The simplistic and dangerous admonition often espoused by present day Roman Catholics: “just follow the Pope and Magisterium,” is not evident here. There are serious reasons for this, which will become abundantly clear as we consider the historical facts about to be presented. We are told that if you truly love the Catholic Faith, you are to hold it, which must*obviously involve personally knowing it. You are then to esteem it above “the authority, above the regard, above the genius, above the eloquence of every man whatsoever” whether he is a pope, bishop, priest, or television evangelist. We are to know the ancient Catholic Faith and then cling to it with all our strength, allowing no authority or eloquence to shake us from its firm foundation. Again and again we are reminded of the following: “resolving to believe that and only that which he is sure the Catholic Church has held universally and from ancient time.” What a departure this is from modern attempts to reinvent and change everything under the pretext of fitting our time or special circumstance. The standard is not change but stability, not innovation but steadfast adherence to

what has already been given and accepted as the Church's genuine Tradition.

Many more examples of this Catholic approach are illustrated in his classic apologetic. It is an understanding that was commonly held in the Catholic East and Catholic West for over a millennium. Unfortunately, ambition and unrestrained arrogance would lead Rome away from Orthodoxy and she would find herself adrift in the innovations and novelties she once so stalwartly opposed.

Before those floodgates of innovation opened in the West, there were many shining examples of Roman popes who were steadfast in maintaining genuine Catholic understanding in the face of ambition, lust for power, or any other ill-conceived motivation. There is no greater champion of the Orthodox Catholic Faith than Pope Gregory the Great who would become the Bishop of Rome some hundred years after St. Vincent wrote his treatise. Though he was the Patriarch of the West and was recognized as having the primacy of honor amongst all the Apostolic Sees, he was a Roman bishop who understood the boundaries to which even patriarchs are subject, including Rome's.

THE POPE WHO CONDEMNED A SINGULAR UNIVERSAL AUTHORITY IN CHRIST'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

When Pope Gregory the Great came to occupy the See of Rome it was a tumultuous time in the western regions of the Empire. The new capital for the last few centuries was Constantinople, not Rome. This transfer occurred in 324 when Constantine the Great moved the Roman Capital to this brand new city on the Bosphorus which would bear his name until overrun by the Moslems in the 1400's. It is known today as Istanbul in modern day Turkey.

When Pope Gregory the Great became Rome's bishop in 590 the eastern region was flourishing, while the western portion was under constant attack and threat from the barbarian hordes. Many in the western regions of the Empire believed they were living in apocalyptic times, including St. Gregory. So real was this belief that it would be expressed in many of the writings of this Roman bishop. It seemed that

the end of the world was at hand and the old Roman capital about to be overrun.

It is in those unsettling times that St. Gregory came onto the scene and it was here that this able churchman would shine as one of the outstanding bishops of that, or any other age. St. Gregory has always been highly regarded in the Orthodox Catholic East not only for his correct understanding and defense of restrained and limited episcopal authority, but also for his keen theological mind and liturgical contributions still used by the Orthodox Catholic East to this very day, especially during Great Lent.

It is his understanding of episcopal authority that is of interest here. A seemingly harmless declaration of the then Emperor Maurice will allow us to see much more clearly the genuine Catholic understanding of limited episcopal authority or prerogatives, whether it be the Bishop of Rome, of Constantinople or of any other Catholic See. It was the decision of the Emperor that the "New Rome," Constantinople, should have its Patriarch John the Faster raised to the same degree of honor as belonged to the one of ancient Rome, still keeping him in the second rank, but only in respect of seniority. The Emperor Maurice thus gave to John the Faster the title of Ecumenical or Universal Patriarch. It is Pope Gregory's vehement denunciation of this action and title which is so interesting not because he wanted it all to himself and that it somehow denied him prerogatives that he alone, along with his predecessors and successors, enjoyed. He had quite a different view altogether. It is a view that condemns not only John's non-Catholic ambitions but those of any bishop who would dare assume what he saw as a usurpation of Christ's unique headship in the Church.

Pope Gregory presents the most powerful denunciation imaginable opposing such arrogance and demonstrates how a bishop or priest can through the seduction of pride or self-importance, follow in the footsteps of the devil himself. It is an analogy, as you will see, that this ancient pope uses with great effect. Rather than to present this letter piecemeal with my commentary, I will first present it in its entirety. I urge a careful and considered reading of what Pope St. Gregory has to say. After

reading the words of this ancient Latin Patriarch of the West, consider the titles, stated positions, and authority now assumed by his successors in Rome. Then honestly ask yourself: would he be any less severe in his comments to subsequent medieval and modern day popes who claim a singularity of authority or jurisdiction in Christ's One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church?

EPISTLE XVIII TO JOHN,
BISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE

Gregory to John, Bishop of Constantinople: At the time when your Fraternity was advanced to sacerdotal dignity, you remember what peace and concord of the Churches you found. But, with what daring or with what swelling of pride I know not, you have attempted to seize upon a new name, whereby the hearts of all your brethren might have come to take offense. I wonder exceedingly at this, since I remember how thou wouldest fain have fled from the episcopal office rather than attain it. And yet, now thou hast got it, thou desirest to exercise it as if thou hast run to it with ambitious intent. For, having confessed thyself unworthy to be called a bishop, thou hast at length been brought to such a pass as, despising thy brethren, to covet to be named the only bishop. And indeed in regard to this matter a weighty letter was addressed to your holiness by my predecessor Pelagius of holy memory; in which he annulled the acts of the synod, which had been assembled among you in the case of our once brother and fellow bishop Gregory, because of that execrable title of pride, and forbade the arch-deacon, whom he had sent according to custom to the threshold of our lord, to celebrate the solemnities of mass with you. But after his death, when I, unworthy, succeeded to the government of the church, both through my other representatives and also through our common son the deacon Sabinus, I have taken care to address your Fraternity, not indeed in writing, but by word of mouth, desiring to restrain yourself from such presumption. And, in case of your refusing to amend, I forbade his celebrating the solemnities of mass with you; that so I might first appeal to your Holiness through a certain sense of shame, to the end that, if

the execrable and profane assumption could not be corrected through shame, strict canonical measures might be resorted to. And, since sores that are to be cut away should be first stroked with a gentle hand, I beg you, I beseech you, and with all the sweetness in my power demand of you, that your Fraternity gainsay all who flatter you and offer you this name of error, nor foolishly consent to be called by the proud title. For truly I say it weeping, and out of inmost sorrow of heart attribute it to my sins, that this my brother, who has been constituted in the grade of episcopacy for the very end of bringing back the souls of others to humility, has up to the present time been incapable of being brought back to humility; that he who teaches truth to others has not consented to teach himself, even when I implore him.

Consider, I pray thee, that in this rash presumption the peace of the whole Church is disturbed, and it is in contradiction to the grace that is poured out on all in common; in which grace doubtless thou thyself wilt have power to grow so far as though determinest with thyself to do so. And thou wilt become by so much the greater as thou restrainest thyself from the usurpation of a proud and foolish title: and though wilt make advanced in proportion as though are not bent on arrogation by derogation of thy brethren. Wherefore, dearest brother with all thy heart love humility, through which the concord with all the brethren and the unity of the holy universal church may be preserved. Certainly the Apostle Paul, when he heard some say, *I am of Paul, I of Apollo, but I of Christ (I Corinthians 1:12)*, regarded with the utmost horror such dilacerations of the Lord's body, whereby they were joining themselves, as it were, to other heads, and exclaimed, saying, *Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul (I Corinthians 1:13)*? If then he shunned the subjecting of the members of Christ partially to certain heads, as if beside Christ, though were to thee apostles themselves, what wilt thou say to Christ, who is the Head of the universal Church, in the scrutiny of the last judgment, having attempted to put his all his members under thy self by the appellation of Universal? Who, I ask, is proposed for imitation in this wrongful title but he who,

despising the legions of angels constituted socially with himself, attempted to start up to an eminence of singularity, that he might seem to be under none and to be alone above all? Who even said, *I will ascend into heaven, I will exult my throne above the stars of heaven: I will sit upon the mount of the testament at the sides of the North: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High* (Isaiah 14:13-14).

For what are all thy brethren, the bishops of the universal church, but stars of heaven, whose life and discourse shine together amid the sins and errors of men, as if amid the shades of night? And when thou desirest to put thyself above them by this proud title, and to tread down their name in comparison to thine, what else dost thou say but *I will ascend into heaven I will exult my throne above the heaven*? Are not all the bishops together clouds, who both rain in the words of preaching, and glitter in the light of good works? And when your Fraternity despised them, and you would fain press them down under yourself, what else say you but what is said by the ancient foe, *I will ascend above the heights of the clouds*? All these things when I behold with tears, and tremble at the hidden judgments of God, my fears are increased, and my heart cannot contain its groans, for that this most holy man the lord John, of so great abstinence and humility, has through the seduction of familiar tongues broken out into such of pitch of pride as to attempt, in his coveting of that wrongful name, to be like him who, while proudly wishing to be like God, lost even the grace of the likeness granted him, and because he sought false glory thereby forfeited true blessedness. Certainly Peter, the first of the apostles, himself a member of the holy and universal Church, Paul, Andrew, John — what were they but heads of particular communities? And yet all were members of one head. And to bind altogether with a short girth of speech the saints before the law, the saints under the law, the saints under grace, all these making up the Lord's Body, were constituted as members of the Church and not one of them has wished himself to be called universal. Now let your Holiness acknowledge to what extent you swell among yourself in desiring to be called by that name by which none presumed to be called who was truly holy.

Was it not the case, as your Fraternity knows, that the prelates of this apostolic See, which by the providence of God I serve, had the honor offered them of being called universal by the venerable council of Chalcedon, but yet not one of them has ever wished to be called by such a title, or seized upon this ill-advised name, lest if, in virtue of the rank of the pontificate, he took to himself singularity, he might seem to have denied it to all his brethren.

But I know that all arises from those who serve your Holiness on terms of deceitful familiarity; against whom I beseech your Fraternity to be prudently on your guard, and not to lay yourself open to be deceived by their words. For they are to be accounted the greater enemies, the more they flatter you with praises. Forsake such; if they must needs deceive, let them at any rate deceive the hearts of worldly men, and not of priests. *Let the dead bury their dead* (Luke 9:60) but say ye with the prophet, *let them be turned back and put to shame that say unto me, Aha, Aha* (Psalm 69:4). And again, *But let not the oil of the sinner lard my head* (Psalm 140:6)

Whence also the wise man admonishes well, *Be at peace with the many: but have one counselor of a thousand* (Ecclesiasticus 6:6). For, *Evil communications corrupt good manners* (I Corinthians 15:33) for the ancient foe, when unable to break into strong hearts, looks out for weak persons who are associated with them, and as it were, scales lofty walls by ladders set against them. So he deceived Adam through the woman who was associated with him. So, when he slew the sons of the blessed job, he left the weak woman, that, being unable of himself to penetrate his heart, he might at any rate be able to do so through the woman's words. Whatever weak and secular persons then are near you, let them be shattered in their own persuasive words and flattery, since they procure to themselves the eternal enmity of God from the very forwardness in being seeming lovers.

Of a truth it was proclaimed of old through the Apostle John, *Little children it is the last hour* (I John 2:18), according as the Truth foretold. And now pestilence and sword rage through the world, nations rise against nations, the globe of the earth is shaken; the gaping earth with its inhabitants is

dissolved. For all that was foretold has come to pass. The king of pride is near, and (awful to be said!) there is an army of priests in course of preparation for him, inasmuch as they who had been appointed to be leaders in humility enlist themselves under the neck of pride. But in this matter, even though our tongue protested not at all, the power of Him who in His own person peculiarly opposes the vice of pride is lifted up for vengeance against elation. For hence it is written, *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble* (James 4:6). Hence again it is said, *Whoso exalteth his heart is unclean before God* (Proverbs 16:5). Hence, against the man that is proud it is written, *Why is the earth and ashes proud* (Ecclesiasticus 10:9)? Hence the Truth in person says, *Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased* (Luke 14:11). And that He might bring us back to the way of life through humility, He deigned to exhibit in Himself what He teaches us saying, *Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart* (Matthew 11:29). For to this end, the only begotten Son of God took upon Himself the form of our weakness; to this end the Invisible appeared not only as visible but even as despised; to this end He endured the mocks of contumely, the reproaches of derision, the torments of suffering; that God in His humility might teach man not to be proud. How great then is the virtue of humility for the sake of teaching which alone He who is great beyond compare became little even unto the suffering of death! For since the pride of the devil was the origin of our perdition, the humility of God has been the means of our redemption. That is to say our enemy having been created among all things, our Redeemer remaining great above all things, deigned to become little among all things.

What then can we bishops say for ourselves, who have received a place of honor from the humility of our Redeemer, and yet imitate the pride of the enemy himself? Lo, we know our Creator to have descended from the summit of His loftiness that He might give glory to the human race, and we, created of the lowest, glory in the lessening of our brethren. God humbled himself even to our dust; and human dust sets his face as high as heaven, and with his tongue passes above the earth, and blushes not; neither is he afraid to be lifted up — even man who

is rottenness, and the son of man that is a worm.

Let us recall to mind, most dear brother, this which is said by the most wise Solomon, *Before thunder shall go lightning, and before ruin shall the heart be exalted* (Ecclesiasticus 32:10); where on the other hand it is subjoined, *Before glory it shall be humbled*. Let us then be humbled in mind, if we are striving to attain to real loftiness. By no means let the eyes of our heart be darkened by the smoke of elation, which the more it rises the more rapidly it vanishes away. Let us consider how we are admonished by the precepts of our Redeemer, who says, *Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (Matthew 5:3) Hence also he says by the prophet, *On whom shall my Spirit rest, but on him, that is humble, and quiet, he that trembleth at my words.* (Isaiah 66:2) Of a truth, when the Lord would bring back the hearts of His disciples, still beset with infirmity, to the way of humility, He said, *Whosoever will be chief among you shall be least of all* (Matthew 20:27). Whereby it is plainly seen how he is truly exalted on high who in his thoughts is humbled. Let us, therefore, fear to be numbered among those who seek the first seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the market, and to be called of men Rabbi. For contrawise, the Lord says to His disciples, *But be ye not called Rabbi: for one is your master and all ye are brethren. And call no man your Father upon the earth, for one is your Father* (Matthew 23:8, 9).

What then, dearest brother, wilt thou say in that terrible scrutiny of the coming judgment, if thou covet to be called in the world not only father, but even general father? Let then the bad suggestion of evil mēn be guarded against; let all instigation to offence be fled from. *It must needs be that offences come; nevertheless, woe to the man by whom the offence cometh* (Matthew 18:7) Lo, by reason of this execrable title of pride the Church is rent asunder, the hearts of all the brethren are provoked to offence. What has escaped your memory how the truth says, *Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believes in me, it were better for him that a mill stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the* (Matthew 18:6)? But it is written, *Charity seeketh not her own* (I Corinthians 13:4). Lo, your Fraternity arrogates to itself even

what is not its own. Again it is written, *Have peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14)?* Where is that which is written, *Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God (Matthew 5:9)?*

It becomes to you to consider, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled. But still, though we neglect to consider, supernal judgment will be on the watch against the swelling of so great elation. And we indeed, against whom such and so great a fault is committed by this nefarious attempt—we, I say are observing what the truth enjoins when it says, *If thy brother shall sin against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of one or two witnesses every word may be established. But if he will not hear them, tell it unto the Church. But if he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as an heathen and a publican (Matthew 18:15-17).* I, therefore, have once again through my representatives taken care to reprove in humble words this sin against the whole Church; and now I write myself. Whatever it was my duty to do in the way of humility I have not omitted. But, if I am despised in my reproof, it remains that I must have recourse to the Church.

Wherefore may Almighty God show your Fraternity how great love for you constrains me when I thus speak, and how much I grieve in this case, not against you, but for you. But the case is such that in it, I must prefer the precepts of the Gospel, the ordinances of the Canons, and the welfare of the brethren, to the person even whom I greatly love.

I have received the most sweet and pleasant letter of your Holiness with respect to the case of the presbyters John and Athanasius, about which, the Lord helping me, I will reply to you in another letter; for being surrounded by the swords of the barbarians, I am now oppressed by such great tribulations that it is not allowed me, I will not say to treat of many things, but hardly even to breathe. Given in the Kalends of January; Indiction 13 [4].

POPE PIUS IX AND VATICAN I: IMPIETY BECOMES DOGMA

Many examples of successor bishops' to Rome's episcopal throne, forgetting the words of Pope St. Gregory can, of course, be cited; but none are as heinous as those which came out of Vatican I in 1870 under the despotic reign of Pius IX. It was at this supposed Ecumenical Council, which was, in reality, a rubber-stamping committee orchestrated by Pius IX, that Rome finally attempted to set in stone these errors with a grand finality.

August Bernhard Hasler, a noted Roman Catholic historian, published a monumental work in 1978 titled, *How the Pope Became Infallible*. This insightful and no punches pulled exposé, was a stunning indictment of the whole process manipulated by Pius IX. Having unprecedented access to the then recently opened Vatican archives, along with readily available sources from that era, Hasler revealed not only dark machinations, but a man in the person of the then present pope who was in all likelihood suffering from some very real mental and physical problems [5]. While the person of Pius IX makes for some interesting reading and speculation, I will not dwell on these personal aspects, alarming and disconcerting as they are. Instead I will only recount some of the pronouncements which issued forth from this assembly and ask that you compare them to the words of Pope Gregory the Great and the historical record. Ask yourself if these pronouncements reflect the understanding of Pope Gregory and genuine Holy Tradition, or would they be met with the same kind of direct and biting denunciations St. John the Faster, Patriarch of Constantinople, experienced from the pen of this ancient Pope of Rome?

PAPAL ARROGANCE DEFINED

“Hence we teach and declare that by the appointment of our Lord, the Roman Church possesses a superiority of ordinary power over all the other churches, and that this power of jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff, which is truly Episcopal, is

immediate; to which all, of whatever right and dignity, both pastors and faithful, both individually and collectively, are bound by their duty of hierarchical subordination and true obedience, to submit not only in matters which belong to faith and morals, but also in those which appertain to the discipline and government of the Church throughout the world, so that the Church of Christ may be one flock under one supreme pastor through the preservation of unity both of communion and of profession of the same faith with the Roman Pontiff. This is the teaching of Catholic truth, from which no one can deviate without loss of faith and salvation" [6].

Pope Gregory condemns a much less obvious arrogance affecting his brother bishop in Constantinople. He compares this ambition to satanic pride and self-glorification for merely assuming a seemingly harmless honorific title.

Pope Pius IX will do this more than one better. With arrogant shamelessness he will orchestrate his own exaltation, even having this make-believe Ecumenical Council declare that if one does not accept this profane and impious dogma, he forfeits his faith and salvation! These anti-Catholic declarations continue with even more outrageous hubris.

"And since by the divine right of Apostolic primacy the Roman Pontiff is placed over the Universal Church, we further teach and declare that he is the supreme judge of the faithful, and that in all causes, the decisions which belong to the Church, recourse may be had to his tribunal, and that none may re-open the judgment of the Apostolic See, than whose authority there is no greater, nor can any lawfully review its judgment. Wherefore they err from the right course that it is lawful to appeal from the judgments of the Roman Pontiffs to an Ecumenical Council, as to an authority higher than that of the Roman Pontiff. If, then, any shall say that the Roman Pontiff has the office merely of inspection or direction and not full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the universal Church, not only in things which belong to faith and morals, but also in those which relate to the discipline and government of the Church spread throughout the world; or assert that he possesses merely the principal part; or that this power which

he enjoys is not ordinary and immediate, both over each and all the churches, and over each and all the pastors, let him be anathema" [7].

RECALLING AGAIN THE WORDS OF POPE ST. GREGORY THE GREAT

Contrast and compare the words of Vatican I with its demands for subordination and rule with the sentiments of St. Gregory in his appeal to St. John the Faster, Patriarch of Constantinople. Just how far, did the successors of Pope Gregory manage to deviate from this ancient pontiff's instruction, while ignoring his dire warnings?

"And when your Fraternity despises them, (other bishops who according to Gregory, are denied their rightful place when any Bishop would dare assume a singular authority apart from their fraternal consensus) and you would fain press them down under yourself, what else say you but what is said by the ancient foe, "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds?" By such acts, whom does the offender imitate? It is, of course, the first one who because of pride and unlawful ambition attempted to ascend a place not his.

In yet another place he says "What wilt thou say to Christ, who is the Head of the universal Church, in the scrutiny of the last judgment, having attempted to put all His members under thyself by the appellation of Universal? Who, I ask, is proposed for imitation in this wrongful title, but he who in despising the legions of angels constituted socially with himself, attempted to start up to an eminence of singularity, that he might seem to be under none and to be alone above all?"

Is there truly any room for doubt that the succeeding Popes of Rome, especially after Pope St. Gregory the Great, started down that slippery slope of pride and ambition? We know that a few hundred years later Cardinal Humbert, the infamous papal delegate of Pope Leo IX, would dare lay upon the altar of Hagia Sophia, the Cathedral of the Patriarchal See of Constantinople, a bull of excommunication directed at the Patriarch and those in communion with him. What was the crime and grave offense of the Orthodox East? It was the non-acceptance of the Roman bishop's usurpation of a

unique and singular authority in Christ's Holy Catholic Church—the very thing condemned with bitter denunciations by Pope Gregory the Great, former occupant of Rome's episcopal throne.

This so-called Eastern Schism in 1054 was not a rebellion of wayward bishops in the East, as I was first taught at Immaculate Conception Grade School. Instead, it was merely the fruition of Roman papal arrogance finally making a break with its brother bishops in the East who understood and held to the genuine Catholic Tradition and proper exercise of episcopal authority. It was, in fact, Rome falling from the heights she had wrongfully attempted to ascend, that would be the starting point for an ever-accelerating departure from the ancient Faith, as she continued to separate herself from Catholic unity, even as she arrogantly thought herself exercising a divine prerogative. Its origination was anything but divine. Indeed, it was nothing more than an imitation of the first apostate, the devil himself, as pointed out by Pope Gregory.

Of course, Vatican I and Pius IX would not be content with simply reasserting the error of Rome's unlawful singular authority and jurisdiction. It would see its conceit totally unrestrained, finding it necessary to declare something even more outrageous. Not content with a declaration of universal authority and jurisdiction over the entire Catholic episcopacy, which included the Orthodox bishops and patriarchs of the East from which she had estranged herself some centuries earlier, Pius IX would now literally go off the deep end. It was not enough that the Roman Pontiff simply act like God, but now in certain circumstances, he literally could be God.

VATICAN I ON PAPAL INFALLIBILITY

The Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*—that is, when in the discharge of the office of the Shepherd and Teacher of all Christians in accordance with his supreme apostolic authority, defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals which must be held by the whole Church—by the divine assistance promised him in blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be

endowed in defining doctrine regarding faith and morals; therefore, such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are irreformable of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church [8].

All academically honest Church historians will, of course, point out the utter lack of evidence for such a claim as papal infallibility in the patristic record. Nowhere in antiquity can such a dogma be surmised or uncovered. Surprisingly, there is even a really damning indictment against this error from just a few hundred years prior to Pius IX—and from a Roman Pope. It is revealed during a fourteenth century conflict between the Pope and the Franciscans. It absolutely destroys the claims of Vatican I and shows that even post-schism Rome had not dared to assert such falsehood even as late as the 14th century. Pope John XXII condemns this heretical understanding of papal infallibility with the full weight of his own episcopal authority when he confronts a faction of wayward Franciscans.

POPE JOHN XXII (1316-1334) CONDEMNS PAPAL INFALLIBILITY

The background for Pope John's denunciation involves a controversy instigated by the Franciscan "Spirituals." This was one of two mutually antagonistic groups within the Order—the other being the party of the "Conventuals" [9]. In the first years of the fourteenth century, the long-simmering dispute between these two groups became even more agitated.

The Spirituals were the more radical and a minority within the Order. It was their contention that Franciscans could play a useful role in the Church only if they adhered to the primitive ideals of their founder, especially the ideal of poverty. This view, though held by all Franciscans, was moderated by that of the Conventuals, who argued that a vow of apostolic poverty was the renunciation of property rights and not necessarily the severe frugality or "poor use" of actual day-to-day living espoused by the "Spirituals" [10].

In the midst of these controversies, Pope John XXII became pope in 1316. He was a professional canonist, an expert administrator and a strict disciplinarian [11]. He also viewed the excesses of the

Spiritualists with much apprehension and sought to moderate, if not outright suppress, their extremist views, which he saw as a threat to the ordered visible structure of the hierarchical Church. It soon became apparent that he viewed the Franciscans generally with much suspicion, even those of the more moderate Conventual party, because he believed even their seemingly more reasonable view still called for the absolute poverty of Christ and his apostles which, of course, was a not too subtle criticism of the ever more powerful and affluent hierarchical Latin Church.

It was one of his predecessors, Pope Nicholas III, who in 1279 regulated and endorsed the life of the Franciscan Order in his decree *Exiis*, which caused John XXII much consternation. John concluded that Nicholas had made radical blunders in his dealings with the Franciscans—blunders concerning both church discipline and church doctrine. John was determined to use his sovereign authority as head of the Church to correct these blunders [12].

In an unexpected move, Pope John assaulted the very core of Franciscan understanding. He started this by annulling the prohibition of his predecessor Pope Nicholas III which forbade the discussion of his decretal, *Exiit*. A Bull promulgated in March, 1322, introduced the theme that Pope John would maintain throughout the entire controversy, i.e., the pope's absolute freedom to revoke the decrees of his predecessors whenever he saw fit [13].

In November of 1323 John released his Bull, *Cum inter nonnullos*. On the surface at least this Bull constituted a flat condemnation of the whole Franciscan theory of evangelical poverty [14]. This news was met with strenuous opposition by the Franciscans, who would seize upon the pronouncements of Nicholas III as being irreformable because of its favorable endorsement of Franciscan understanding. It would also cause some of the leaders of the Franciscans to label John XXII a heretic and would result in the first real theological pronouncement of a pope's personal infallibility from a group of dissident Franciscans who at the time were hiding themselves in the court of the excommunicated Emperor Lewis of Bavaria.

Keep in mind that the following bold pronouncement was not coming from any Pope, but from those who were opposing one. What they said had never been uttered by any previous pontiff, but only by those engaged in a conflict with a current pope who was not sympathetic to their cause, as was Nicholas III. According to the renowned Roman Catholic historian Brian Tierney, their bold assertion is an entirely novel contribution made by rebellious friars in exile. It was a significant development born out of their desire to see Pope John XXII bound to the more favorable assertions of a previous Pope regarding their own cause and understanding. Though some earlier Franciscan theologians like Pietro Olivi had intimated lesser versions of this new understanding, they had up until now been considered somewhat eccentric and not taken very seriously. It would now, because of this new escalation, be taken up and discussed by the leading canonists and theologians of the age. While still considered a novel and revolutionary doctrine, from 1324 on the idea that the pope might be personally infallible would not be altogether absent from the ecclesiology of the West [15]. Following are the words from an unnamed dissident friar speaking for his brother rebels from their place of exile in Bavaria.

What the Roman Pontiffs have once defined in faith and morals through the key of knowledge is immutable because the Roman Church is unerring...what is once defined through the key of knowledge by the supreme pontiffs, the vicars of God, to be the truth of faith cannot be called into doubt by any successor, nor can the contrary to what is defined be affirmed without the one doing this be adjudged a heretic...what is once defined in faith and morals is true for all eternity and unchangeable by any one [16].

In *Quia Quorundum*, given on November 10, 1324, Pope John XXII confronted the errors of the dissident Franciscans and their false assertions regarding the irreformability of prior papal pronouncements even if they dealt with matters of faith or morals. John chastised and condemned those who would dare teach such heresy. John obviously recognized, among other things, the potential handcuffing of successor popes, and consistently insisted that he was not and could not be

bound by any previous pope's declarations, no matter if they were disciplinary or supposedly binding in the realm of faith or morals. These assertions of papal irreformability John XXII rejected outright. So while Pope John in his dispute with the Franciscans was pressed by them to recognize the infallibility of a previous occupant of that See pronouncing on faith or morals, he resisted it as false and condemned those who dared hold such opinions.

Pope John called it a *pestiferous doctrine*. With further comment and agitation he said the following about the Franciscan claim. "On account of which, moreover, since it was previously mentioned in the aforesaid consideration, namely that, (according to the dissidents) it is not licit for their successors to call again into doubt those things, which were once for all defined by the key of knowledge in faith or morals by supreme pontiffs, although it is otherwise, so they say, in regards to those things, which have been ordained by supreme pontiffs by means of the key of power, it is evidently clear from the following things that this is directly contrary to the truth" [17].

While John XXII, a pope of the fourteenth century some three hundred years after the Great Schism, saw himself as the head of the Catholic Church (the error that led to Rome's separating herself from the Catholic and Orthodox East) he would not, under any circumstance, abide the notion that a pope had an infallible charism which made any declarations from the episcopal throne of Rome irreformable. It would take another 500 years before there would be a pope daring (or crazed) enough to declare that impious doctrine. It is truly remarkable that Pius IX and Vatican I would then have the audacity to say it was a dogma implicitly understood in Christ's Catholic Church from the very beginning, when the historical record so blatantly contradicts them.

Details such as historical fact, the testimony of the Church fathers, and the complete absence of evidence to substantiate their novel claims would not be able to deter the Infallibists from forcing this deviant understanding upon the assembled Latin Hierarchy at Vatican I.

Even though such an outrageous lie had been exposed by the words of a not too distant predecessor and by the many more ancient testimonies, it still took hold and was finally elevated to dogma at Vatican I. Those who supported this novelty such as Archbishop Henry Edward Manning of Westminster would proclaim without apology that "Dogma Has Conquered History" [18]. This was something that the learned Roman Catholic Bishops attending that assembly found contemptible. Many of these brave adherents to Holy Tradition would pay dearly for their truthful opposition. In the end, however, most would eventually wear down and succumb, rather than face the ongoing and unrelenting wrath of Pius IX. There would be a few stalwart souls who would not yield to such errors, no matter the consequence, including priests and bishops; and it would bring yet another, though small, schism for the Latin West.

I was surprised to find out several years ago that my own grandfather on my mother's side was an Episcopalian, as a result of his own parents' leaving the Roman Catholic Church when their priest and entire parish left communion with Rome around this very time period in French Quebec. These events also spawned what is now known as The Old Catholic Movement. It would cause a considerable exit of many faithful priests and even bishops who would claim that they were still Roman Catholic even though they were no longer in union with the Roman bishop. There are remnants of Old Catholics to this day.

So why was it that this dogma needed to conquer history in the minds of the Infallibists? That answer is quite apparent when one becomes familiar with the historical record. It is because this understanding of a bishop—any bishop—having such a charism or universal authority and jurisdiction just doesn't prove itself legitimate in light of the historical record and witness of the ancient fathers. The only alternative is to declare that the innovations they wish to impose no matter how contrary to how the ancient Church understood episcopal authority and practice, trumps or conquers Holy Tradition and genuine Catholic understanding. What the Church has always held and

taught is of no consequence to these innovators and is brushed aside for their own desire.

Here are some examples that must be conquered, but in truth by their new and innovative dogmas never will be; men who, unfortunately for Roman pretensions, disprove all her false assertions that Rome's bishop rules, and has always ruled the Catholic Church of Christ singularly, and that he cannot be defective when it comes to teaching on faith or morals.

POPES CAUGHT WANDERING FROM THE FAITH

Pope Liberius (352-366) occupied the Roman See during the time of the ongoing Arian controversies. This was a heresy introduced in Egypt initially by a priest named Arius. Arius taught that Christ, though the highest of God's creation, was not God. This false credo in essence proclaimed that Christ, though the Messiah, was a created being and "there was a time when He was not."

Constantine the Great, the Roman Emperor who moved the capital to Constantinople and who first afforded Christianity legal status, convened the Great Council of Nicea in 325. There were assembled approximately 318 bishops of the Church, many of whom still bore in their bodies the maiming and injuries they had suffered for their faith in violent persecutions prior to Constantine's edict.

It was in this first great council of the post persecution era that the Church assembled herself to determine what was in fact the apostolic understanding regarding the person of Christ. The Creed that we as Catholics now confess was a result of this and the subsequent Council of Constantinople in 381.

These councils condemned by name Arius and his impious teachings by reaffirming for the Church that Christ was not created but "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, of one essence with the Father through whom all things were made." The importance of this confession is such that if one cannot profess it, he does not hold the Catholic Christian Faith.

According to the assembled fathers of the Church, Arianism—by making Christ something less than God—renders it impossible for us to become like Christ or be joined to Him. Only if Christ is both God and man can humanity be united with God, according to the venerable fathers. For none but God Himself can open to humans the way of union. The Council therefore declared Arius' teaching a heresy, unacceptable to the church, and decreed that Christ is truly God. He is of the same essence *homoousios* with God the Father.

Even though the great Council of Nicea condemned Arianism, the heresy still almost overwhelmed the Church and was a major concern for many more years. It was during these times that Liberius became pope. "Pope Liberius was initially a defender of the Nicene Faith, but the then Emperor Constantius II, an Arian himself, deposed and banished Pope Liberius. In the place of Liberius, the Roman clergy elected a new pope, Felix II. As a result of his See being taken by another, Liberius succumbed to Arian demands and signed a heretical confession of faith and agreed to the excommunication of Athanasius, the great champion of the Nicene Council" [19].

It was under these circumstances that Liberius lost his See because of his Orthodoxy, to regain it again only through his apostasy. Liberius would flip-flop yet again when the winds were suitable and subscribe anew to Catholic Orthodoxy. However, this much cannot be denied. Pope Liberius held and taught heresy while a "legitimate" pope of Rome, and there was no special charism of "infallibility" that gave him either the courage, or the sense, to avoid erring on a crucial matter of the Faith.

Pope Zosimus (417-418). Pope Zosimus's brief pontificate was no hindrance to his finding himself wandering from the Faith. This pontiff wrote an embarrassing encyclical letter in which he spoke authoritatively from the Roman See. This infamous letter rebuked none other than St. Augustine and the rest of the North African church for their condemnation of Pelagius and his teachings.

Pelagius and his adherents held the false notion that perfection apart from the grace of God was

obtainable, and that man was not really crippled by sin and its resulting negative effects — that enough effort on our own part was really all we needed to obtain union with Christ. This is by no means all there was to this heresy, but should give you the flavor of it.

What Zosimus did in addressing the North African Church is especially interesting, particularly given the understanding of his predecessor, Pope Innocent. Pope Zosimus rebuked St. Augustine and the other bishops of that region for declaring the Pelagian teachings to be heretical, especially since he, though erroneously, deemed them Orthodox. In response, these bishops warned Zosimus that he was being misled and that he should uphold the official judgment of Pope Innocent who was pontiff before him and who had also condemned the teachings of Pelagius. His response was that he had given the matter his thorough consideration and that was the end of it. Instead of rolling over and accepting the Roman bishop's directive, they openly resisted him.

In 418 they convened their own council of some 200-plus bishops and passed a number of canons condemning the teachings of Pelagius in direct contradiction of Pope Zosimus. This is not something done by bishops who believe the Roman bishop has an infallible teaching charism or universal authority in the Church. In fact, Zosimus buckled under their pressure and changed his position to be in line with theirs. These events prove to be yet another example of how Vatican I and its declarations had nothing to do with either historical facts or the genuine understanding of the ancient Catholic Church when it came to the person of the Pope of Rome, his teaching office, and the scope of his authority in the universal Church. It is also telling in that Pope Zosimus did not consider his immediate predecessor's statements on Pelagianism to be binding or authoritative either. This, in itself, also betrays the complete absence of this "dogma" in Holy Tradition, pronounced with such arrogant assurance at Vatican I.

Pope Vigilius (537-555) provides us with yet another example of the limitations of Rome's bishop when it came to his jurisdiction or teaching authority in the Catholic Church. The Emperor

Justinian called the Fifth Ecumenical Council in Constantinople in the year 553 A.D. He did so without either the approval or assent of Pope Vigilius. Like all early Ecumenical Councils, these gatherings were called by the Emperor, and only at Chalcedon in 451 and Constantinople in 680 did the papal legates preside. And it is clear that the popes did not claim this as their exclusive right. Neither did the dogmatic nor disciplinary decisions of these councils require papal confirmation, for their force and authority depended on the consent of the Church, as expressed in the Synod, and afterwards in the fact of their being generally received [20].

Here was the situation. Certain writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus, and Ibas of Edessa were troubling the peace of the Church. These writings were known as *The Three Chapters*. While the council that Pope Vigilius neither called nor attended looked into the matter, he issued an official papal decree that reversed an earlier official papal decree—*The Judicatum*, in which he condemned these writings. For reasons unknown he contradicted himself in his new decree, *The Constitutum*. This decree closes with the following words:

"We ordain and decree that it be permitted to no one who stands in ecclesiastical order or office to write or bring forward, or undertake, or teach anything contradictory to the contents of this *Constitutum* in regards to *The Three Chapters*, or after this declaration, to begin a new controversy about them. And if anything has already been done or spoken in regard of *The Three Chapters* in contradiction to this our ordinance, by any one whomsoever, this we declare void by the authority of the apostolic See" [21].

Was the matter then irreformably settled? Pope Vigilius had spoken authoritatively from the throne of Peter regarding a matter of faith; he even says he did so by the authority of that Apostolic See. What choice did the council have but to pack up and go home? The choice it had and exercised was this: The assembled North African bishops disobeyed the papal decree and on their ecumenical authority condemned *The Three Chapters* in direct defiance of the very fallible Pope Vigilius.

Some seven months after the Council closed, Pope Vigilius again changed his mind and submitted to the decrees of this Council which defied his authority, now yielding himself to its judgment. He showed himself to be yet another glaring historical example of how popes were not above the consensus of even a local Council such as this, especially when they stood squarely on the back of Holy Tradition, while they themselves were exposed as having wandered from the Faith.

Pope Honorius (625-638) is the last, but by no means least, of the examples I will provide of popes who by their own teachings and actions completely destroyed the pretensions of Vatican I and its assertions that an infallible teaching charism resides somehow in the person of whoever happens to be occupying the Roman See. It's this particular pope who causes some of the most tortured explanations imaginable by apologists of Vatican I. The clear facts of history, however, provide little or no opportunity for their manipulations of the record to sway any but those with blinders already on.

During the reign of Honorius, the heresy of Monothelitism was making the rounds. It teaches, contrary to genuine Holy Tradition, that Christ had only one will — the divine — and did not have a human will. The implication of this, as well as any

other heresy, is to present a distortion of the Church's understanding that Christ was truly and fully human as well as truly and fully God.

In a series of events that included the Emperor Heraclius, the Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople, and Pope Honorius of Rome, we become aware of Pope Honorius and his affirming of the one will in Christ (Monothelitism) in an official letter he sent to Sergius, his brother Patriarch in Constantinople. In no uncertain terms and exercising his teaching authority as Rome's bishop, Honorius attested to and established this understanding of the one will which he held to be self-evident and beyond controversy [22].

The question now is how would history and, even more importantly, the Catholic Church of Christ view the pronouncements of Honorius from the See of Peter? If there resides in the person of Rome's bishop an infallible teaching authority regarding faith, and if this particular gifting would never allow a pontiff to teach error in his capacity as Peter's successor, wouldn't the matter be settled? Of course, it would. Unfortunately for those who believe that to be the case, that was not the understanding of the Church, or the Ecumenical Council or popes who would be successors of the now infamous Pope Honorius.

ENDNOTE FOR THE FIRST SECTION

[1] Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers* vol.12 Epistles of Gregory the Great Book VII Epistle XL.

[2] *Origins of Papal Infallibility 1150-1350*, Brian Tierney, pg. 144.

[3] "Commonitory," St. Vincent of Lerins, *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Series II, Vol. XI.

[4] Gregory, Letter to John, *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Book V Epistle XVIII.

[5] *How the Pope Became Infallible*, August Hasler, pgs. 105-128.

[6] *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, William Webster, pg. 171-172 Declarations of Vatican I Chapter III; On the Power and Nature of the Primacy of the Roman Pontiff, 2nd paragraph.

[7] *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, William Webster, pg. 171-172 Declarations of Vatican I Chapter III; On the Power and Nature of the Primacy of the Roman Pontiff, 4th paragraph.

[8] *The Church at the Bar of History*, William Webster, pg. 163 Documents of Vatican I.

[9] *Origins of Papal Infallibility 1150-1350*, Brian Tierney pg. 96.

[10] *ibid*, pg. 97.

[11] *ibid*, pg. 172.

[12] *ibid*, pg. 175.

[13] *ibid*, pg. 173.

[14] *ibid*, pg. 181.

[15] *ibid*, pg. 185.

[16] *ibid*, pg. 182.

[17] "Quia Quorundam," Pope John XXII, <http://ewtn.com/library/papaldoc/qquor-e.htm>.

[18] *How the Pope Became Infallible*, August Hasler, pg. 177.

[19] *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, William Webster pg. 64.

[20] *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, William Webster pg. 60.

[21] *ibid*, pg. 66.

[22] *Heresies, Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church*, Harold O.J. Brown pg. 190.

— to be concluded in the next issue —

THE HOLY MARTYRS TROPHIMUS AND EUCARPION WHOSE MEMORY THE CHURCH CELEBRATES ON MARCH 18

The holy martyrs Trophimus and Eucarpion were natives of Nicomedia and lived at the time of Emperor Maximian, 286-305 A.D., during the dismal days of the Christian persecutions. At that time our forefathers were thrown in jail and interrogated with great persistence and tenacity. Those who remained faithful in their belief were put to death.

Trophimus and Eucarpion were valiant soldiers of the emperor and they persecuted Christ and those who believed on Him. They interrogated them and took them into custody. They were given absolute authority over those they seized and, according to their wishes, they abused some of them, while others they set free.

Once the two were on their way to arrest certain Christians and saw a bright red cloud that resembled a great bonfire and it descended from heaven straight over them and a voice was heard saying, "Why do you persecute my servants with such zeal? Do not be misled; no one can conquer those who believe in Me. Join them and you shall inherit the kingdom of heaven."

When they heard these words, they fell to the earth and could not lift up their eyes. Those who mistreated the Christians earlier could not raise their eyes to see where that thunderous and mighty voice came from. As they lay prone on the earth they said, "Truly great is the God, Who hath appeared to us today and blessed shall we be if we become His servants." As they spoke these words in terror, the blazing cloud was divided in two and stood over each one of them. And out of it was

heard another voice saying, "Arise; since you have repented for your darkness, your sins are forgiven."

The blessed soldiers stood up and saw a radiant man adorned in white standing on the cloud and before Him stood a great multitude. Astounded by this they shouted in one voice, "Accept us too, O Lord, for our sins are many and countless as we have scorned Thee, the only True God, and dishonored the Christians."

At the conclusion of these words, the cloud was reunited and arose to heaven. They continued to weep for their earlier transgressions and misdeeds and, supplicating God, they returned to their homes. After this happened, they tried to show kindness to the Christians who languished in jail and consoled their fears, greeting them as brethren. They released them and sent them to their homes.

When the prefect heard this, he was infuriated and ordered that they be brought to his presence. When they appeared, he asked them what the reason was for their conversion. They told him about the vision they had seen. He ordered that they be suspended on a post and that their bodies be gnawed with steel claws. After this he ordered that their wounds be abraded with material of rough surface. The saints endured this treatment courageously and rejoiced; thanking God. Observing their reaction the prefect was outraged and ordered that a great furnace be lit in the center of Nicomedia and that the two be cast in. And so it was done. They surrendered their souls into the hands of God and they received the undying laurels of martyrdom.

Translated from Greek by Leo Papadopoulos from *The Great Synaxaristes*. Athens. Matthew Lagges, publisher. Vol. III, 2nd ed., pp. 364-65. Rewritten by L. Papadopoulos, 2004. All rights reserved.

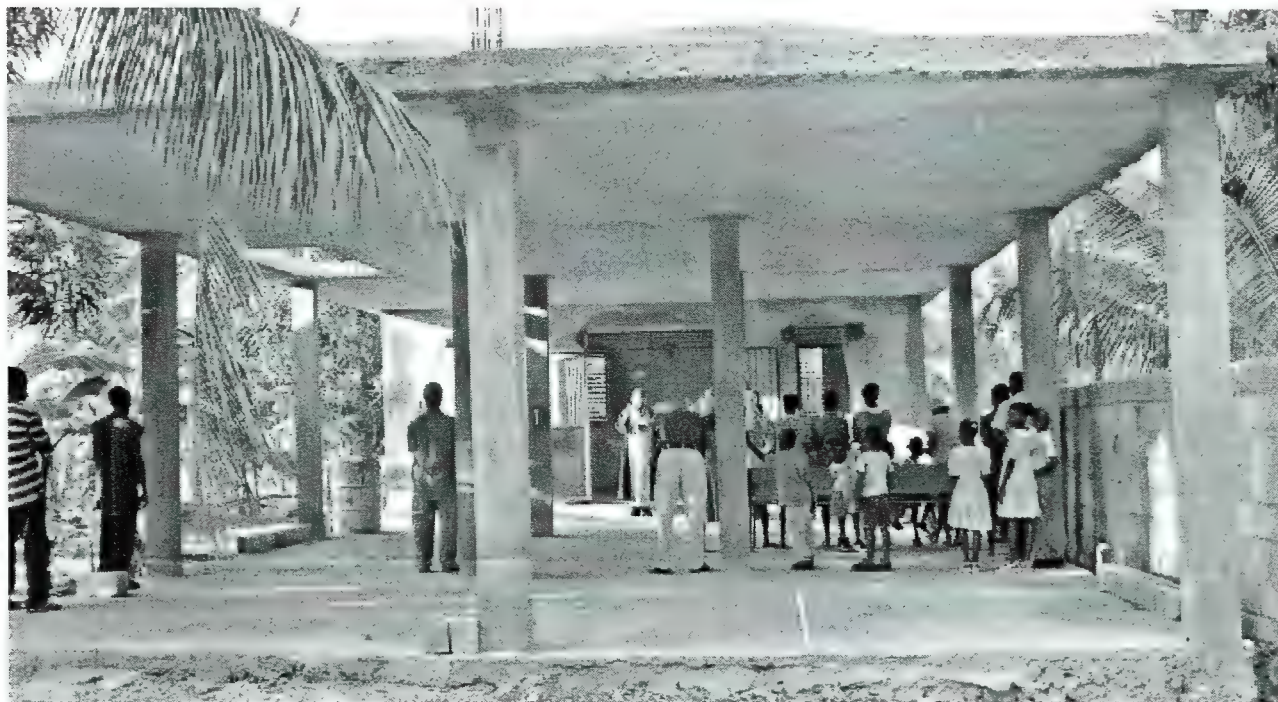
HAITI: THE MISSION GROWS... AND GROWS!

Mid-Lent 2006; finally back to Haiti after an unwanted absence from my second family of six months. Not “fixed”, but functional — though driving under Haitian conditions remains out of the question. In Haiti, one needs an extra eye or two, not just one sort of working! Mercifully, calm came over the country a week or so before my arrival, which we feared up until the last days might yet have to be once again postponed because of the unstable conditions in the country. One of the first things to strike me upon arrival: *much* less trash and garbage on the principal streets than I have become accustomed to, though huge mounds remain in many places. At least somebody is doing *something*! The UN forces remain, but now there is only an armored vehicle here and there; in September, in Port-au-Prince one couldn't travel more than a few blocks without encountering a heavy vehicle festooned with grim-looking men in uniform, bristling with automatic weapons. Thanks be to God!

I remained only briefly in Port-au-Prince, tending to essential errands, before flying to Jacmel for weekend services at St. Augustine's, Cyvadier. On arrival, I found that basic construction work on the new building, which will serve for some years as the church, had been completed — but only just barely. Construction trash still lay throughout the building and grounds, and although the iron doors which enclose the sanctuary were on site, they had not yet



been installed. Astonishingly, by time for vigil on Saturday, most of the work had been completed, but the service began (somewhat late) with materials still



THE NEW CHAPEL OF ST. AUGUSTINE, CYVADIER, JACMEL, HAITI

scattered around and the workmen standing aside during the service. As soon as it was completed, they went back to work, continuing well into the night (thanks to the remarkable luxury of having essentially full-time power there, so far as I know the only region in Haiti so blessed). By Sunday morning, for liturgy the building looked presentable, although still rather barren and unadorned, apart from the few icons temporarily placed here and there. Fittingly, Fr. Grégoire, the appointed pastor, served the first liturgy in the new temple. Since my departure, work has continued, and it is to be hoped that by the time of the temple feast in June, all will be in good order.

The following day, I flew back to Port-au-Prince (Haiti now boasts a rapidly developing internal air service, with several lines serving all the principal towns regularly with nice “modern” tiny aircraft — mostly 7-15 seaters), had a two-hour respite at Maison Mission before returning to the airport to fly with Fr. Grégoire to Les Cayes. Fr. Grégoire had warned me that I would be astonished at what I found there, and indeed I was.

After years of services in “chapels of occasion” — mostly rooms in private homes or classrooms —

last year the budding mission finally found a stable meeting place, a roomy classroom which was theirs every weekend to convert to a usable space. But in January, Fr. Grégoire arrived for the monthly vigil and liturgy only to find the building locked up tight. A space was found, the vigil and liturgy served, and only later on Sunday did he find the explanation: the school which had leased the building, from which we rented the room, had failed to pay its rent over a considerable period of time, and thus had been expelled. Negotiations with the proprietor led to the Mission leasing the entire building for three years. By the time I got there, the partition wall separating the previous chapel from the adjoining room had been torn down, more than doubling the space. As soon as funds are available, a masonry wall will be removed and remade into an iconostasis, providing access to yet another room which will serve as the sanctuary. The resulting space is certainly sufficient for as many as 100 worshippers, with a spacious sanctuary. Not permanent, but adequate for the foreseeable future. Fr. Grégoire served vespers the evening of our arrival (Monday), with a substantial congregation.

The following day, we set out to examine the



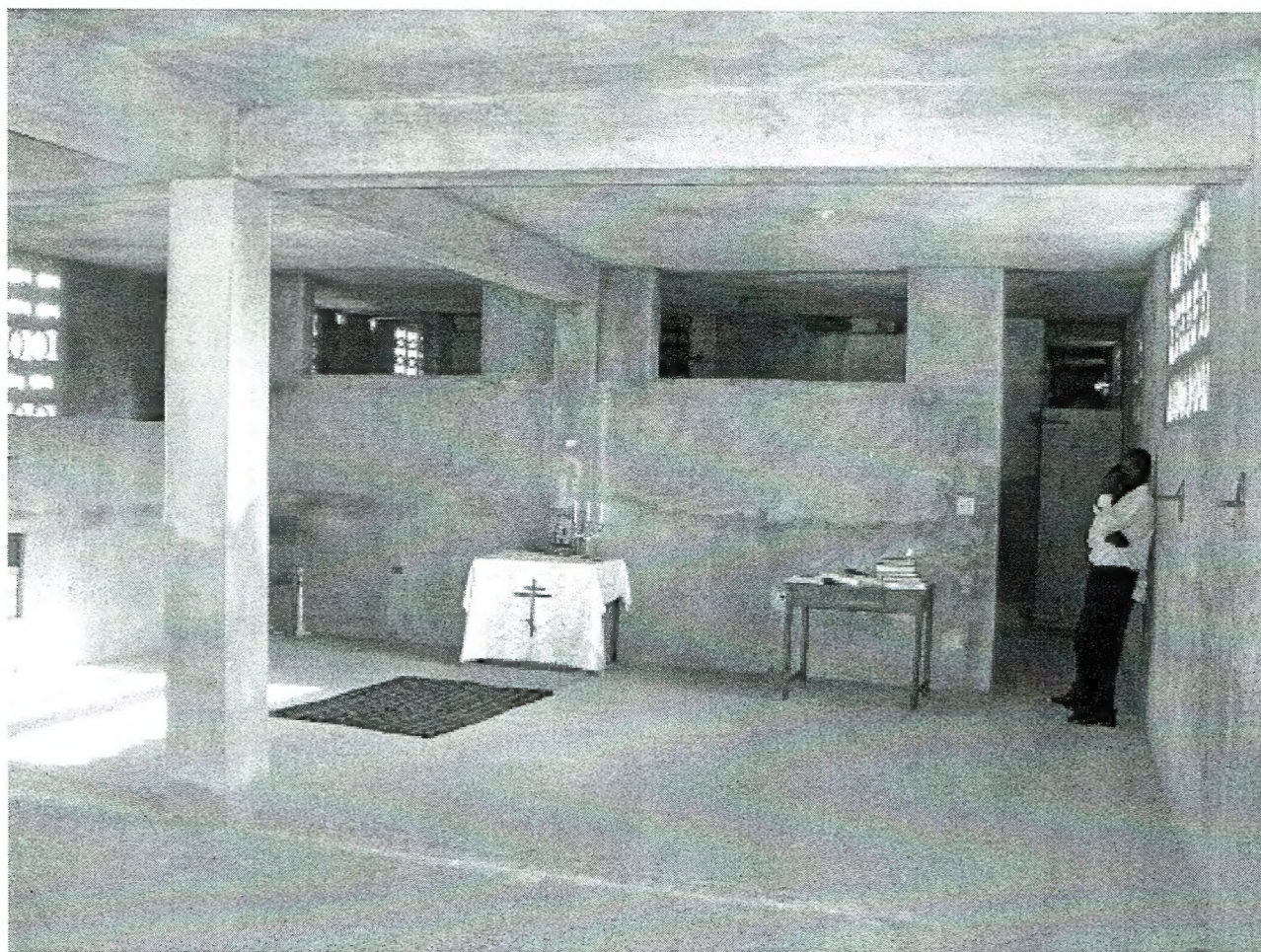
THE FUTURE HOME OF ST. JOHN OF SAN FRANCISCO CHURCH, LES CAYES, HAITI

parcel of land for which he had been negotiating since soon after my departure in September. The section originally offered proved to be impractical, but another, a few hundred yards down the road (and closer to the main crossroads and city center) was soon found. It is on the edge of the city, on the main highway from Port-au-Prince to Port-Salut further west, a very short distance from the crossroads with the city's principal thoroughfare and the "highway" (gravel soon deteriorating to boulders and mud) to the airport and on to Jérémie in the northwestern part of the southern peninsula. At present, it looks like just what it is — a piece of ground. The entirety is one huge rice-field, tabletop flat. Fortunately, water in the area is easily controlled, so converting the currently periodically inundated ground to dry land will pose minimal difficulties. About a half-mile from the sea, and significantly elevated, it should not be at undue risk from hurricanes (at least on the scale of risk availabilities at Les Cayes!). Currently, there is nothing

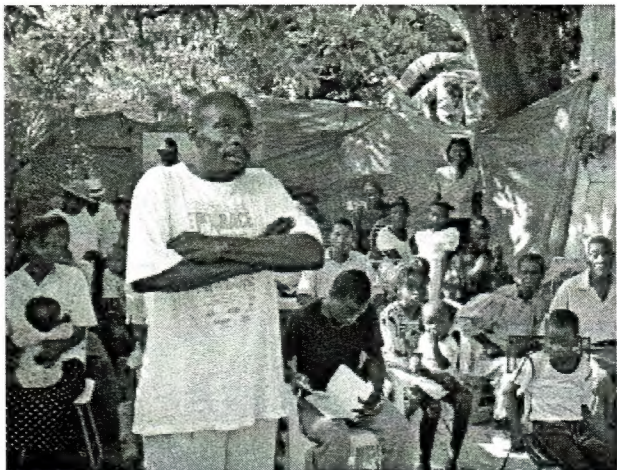
but open land behind it all the way to the beginnings of the mountains, and nothing but low buildings and trees between it and the sea, so the area is pleasantly ventilated. Thanks to some very generous donations for the purpose, funds have been found for its purchase, which may indeed have been completed (which means begun in Haiti; it's likely to be a year or so before we see a title) by the time you read this.

In the course of the visit, the choice of a patronal saint for the community was finally made (by lot), later submitted to Bishop Gabriel for ratification. No longer nameless, it is now the Mission of St. John of San Francisco at Les Cayes.

Later in the day, back to Port-au-Prince (with an unexpected five-minute stopover at the Jacmel airport) — one day left, time enough for yet another surprise. I had been told on arrival that it was necessary to plan a trip to Léogane (in time, about half-way to Jacmel by car) to meet with a group of "interested" people there. Little did I suspect!



ST. JOHN OF SAN FRANCISCO CHAPEL, LES CAYES, HAITI — MAYBE YOU CAN HELP FURNISH IT!



SS PEER AND PAUL, LÉOGANE, IS BORN

Before my time, there had once been an Orthodox chapel at Léogane (at which Abp. Hilarion had served during his visit there), later closed in the course of the “difficult” years which led to my appointment. Only a very few of the people who had been involved there occasionally appeared for services at Nativity in Port-au-Prince, certainly in considerable measure due to the length and difficulty and cost of the trip. Last summer, Fr. Jean’s son Martin undertook (at the age of 17) to try to re-establish contact with some of those people and to rekindle an awareness of Orthodoxy in the town. He distributed flyers, held catechetical meetings and common prayers — and met with much interest. So it was that we went (about 2 hours each way, under normal travel conditions), found our “guide” standing at the side of the highway, and finally penetrated to the side yard of a house at the back of the settled area, which had been prepared as a makeshift meeting space. At first there were only a handful of people (*nothing* ever happens “on time” in Haiti), but before long the space was packed — at least thirty people, probably more. A number of people (a few of them already baptized but lapsed) spoke of their interest, posed some good questions to which Fr. Jean & Fr. Grégoire spoke (the meeting was largely conducted in Créole) — and then Martin arose to make his presentation. At great length and in considerable detail (in French, fortunately) he spoke of the history of Orthodoxy at Léogane and of what he had found when he began visiting there regularly last summer — and assured me that it would be a great lapse in my duty if the Mission failed to respond appropriately.

He was right. Already, they had chosen their patron, praying that the mission might be dedicated to SS Peter and Paul.

So what can we do? Already we have four functioning missions (plus the Chapel of St. Moses the Black),



with only two priests and one deacon. For the present (experimentally), we decided to provide charter tap-tap (pickup truck with benches) service for Sunday liturgies from Léogane — very costly, but necessary. At present, we can’t offer any hope of regular services there (though I’ve just received word that a suitable building has been found for lease at an affordable price for a chapel), though from time to time Fr. Grégoire and I both pass through the city (once I can drive again, that is) en route to Jacmel and/or Les Cayes, so an occasional vespers or *molieben* can be arranged.

So — in one visit, two new missions established (Vladyka Gabriel also ratified the choice of SS Peter & Paul) — one of which (it appeared) just popped out of the bushes. Glory be to God!

Home again safely, and now eagerly anticipating the forthcoming return for St. Augustine’s feastday in June. What wonders God works!



☐ Yes... I want to pledge support for the Haitian Orthodox Mission! Please record my pledge through December 2006 for a contribution of ☐ \$200 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ other amount (_____) monthly, by ☐ check or ☐ MasterCard/VISA (number below). I enclose my first month's pledge for _____. (You may of course choose a dedicated use below if you wish.)

☐ Yes... I want to make a one-time contribution toward the capital expenses of the Haitian Orthodox Mission, in the amount of ☐ \$1000 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$100 ☐ other amount (_____), for which I enclose my ☐ check ☐ MasterCard/VISA (number below). I would like my contribution to be used for ☐ support of the church-related schools ☐ purchase and construction of church/mission sites ☐ transportation funds for faithful living at long distances from the church ☐ aid to MEPE for a nursery ☐ however needed.

Name: Address:

City/State/ZIP:

Telephone:

MasterCard/VISA number: _____ - _____ - _____ - _____

Expiration date: ____/____

Please mail to:
Haitian Orthodox Mission
1180 Orthodox Way
Liberty, TN 37095

MISSION BLEU

TREAT YOURSELF TO ONE OF THE WORLD'S FINEST COFFEES
ORGANICALLY GROWN • FAIR-TRADE: PURCHASED DIRECTLY FROM A PEASANT-OWNED COLLECTIVE
VACUUM-BAGGED ROASTED WHOLE BEAN (OR UNROASTED CAFÉ LAVÉ)

As soon as it is available, please send me ____ pounds (@ \$15/lb.) of Mission Bleu, for the support of the Haitian Orthodox Mission. (Shipping costs are additional: \$5 for 1 or 2 packages, \$10 for 5 packages within the US; elsewhere, or for larger quantities, please call for shipping information.)

I enclose my ☐ check or money order ☐ MasterCard/VISA (number below).

Name: Address:

City/State/ZIP:

Telephone:

MasterCard/VISA number: _____ - _____ - _____ - _____

Expiration date: ____/____

Please mail to:
Haitian Orthodox Mission
1180 Orthodox Way
Liberty, TN 37095

Saint Seraphim Camp 2006

July 30 — August 6

Located at Camp Acahela in Pennsylvania

Cost: \$175 for one great week!

Register by logging on to:

<http://www.orthodoxinfo.biz/camp/htm>

or call

Matushka Cecelia Soloviev

518-765-2871